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SENATE BILL 2547
By Ford J

AN ACT to amend Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 37, Chapter 5 and Title 71, relative to welfare programs for families with children.

WHEREAS, the federal welfare reform legislation titled the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act (P.L. 104-193) appropriated \$500 million on a one-time basis at enhanced rates to help states implement the de-linking of welfare and Medicaid eligibility for families with children; and

WHEREAS, P.L. 104-193 significantly allocated these funds to help states pay for the costs associated with ensuring that children and parents do not lose Medicaid coverage as a result of welfare reform; and

WHEREAS, each state has been allocated a share of the \$500 million fund to cover the costs of authorized administrative and outreach activities related to federal welfare reform, including educational activities, public service announcements, outstationing of eligibility workers, developing and disseminating new publications, local community activities, redesigning application forms and updating computer systems; and

WHEREAS, the federal match rate for such outreach activities is from seventy-five percent (75%) to ninety percent (90%), as opposed to the usual fifty percent (50%) federal

match rate, thus making the \$500 million fund even more attractive to states and encouraging them to engage in such activities; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. Congress recently liberalized the requirements for states to utilize the fund and lifted the fund's sunset date, yet to date, the State of Tennessee has not acted to claim the approximately \$9 million in federal dollars available for the state to fund administrative and outreach activities aimed at preventing families from losing Medicaid coverage as a result of the de-linking of welfare and Medicaid eligibility; and

WHEREAS, the Brown Amendment to P.L. 104-193 ensures state legislative authority to appropriate federal welfare and child care grant monies; and

WHEREAS, it is within the authority of this General Assembly to appropriate federal monies and it is imperative that this Body act expeditiously to claim Tennessee's fair share of the \$500 million fund authorized by P.L. 104-193; now, therefore,

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE:

SECTION 1. Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 71, Chapter 3, is amended by adding the following as a new part 11 thereto:

71-3-1101. This part shall be known as and may be referred to as the "Tennessee Families With Children Health Care Coverage Preservation Act".

71-3-1102. (a) There is established a Tennessee Families With Children Health Care Coverage Preservation Task Force, hereinafter referred to in this part as the "task force".

(b) The task force shall be composed of nine (9) members, which shall consist of the following:

(1) Two (2) members of the senate, recommended by the speaker and minority leader of the senate, whose terms shall correspond with that of the speaker;

(2) Two (2) members of the house of representatives, recommended by the speaker and the minority leader of the house of representatives, whose terms shall correspond with that of the speaker;

(3) The commissioner of human services or the commissioner's designee, who shall be the chairperson of the task force;

(4) The commissioner of children's services or the commissioner's designee;

(5) Three (3) private citizens, appointed by the governor, who have demonstrated expertise and experience in administering public assistance programs related to health care services for families with children whose initial term shall expire January 31, 2001. Thereafter, the term shall be two (2) years.

71-3-1103. The duties and responsibilities of the task force shall be to develop and oversee the implementation of an outreach strategy to accomplish the primary goals and objectives established for states pursuant to the "\$500 Million Fund Act", which strategy shall include, but not be limited to, implementing the following activities:

(1) educational activities relating to current or potential beneficiaries;

(2) public service announcements

(3) outstationing eligibility workers (adding more workers to current sites or expanding to new locations such as churches, child care centers, and WIC offices);

(4) outreach activities, including targeted mailing campaigns and contracting with other organizations to assist beneficiaries with the redetermination process;

(5) developing and disseminating new materials targeted at individuals at risk of losing TennCare coverage;

(6) training of eligibility workers, providers, and the community on matters related to the application of the July 1, 1996 AFDC eligibility rules to families applying for TennCare coverage; and

(7) local community activities (such as meetings with community leaders and presentations to community groups).

71-3-1104. (a) All legislative members of the task force shall be paid for attending task force meetings as provided in Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 3-1-106.

(b) Non-legislative members of the task force shall receive no compensation but may be reimbursed for expenses in accordance with the provisions of the comprehensive travel regulations as promulgated by the department of finance and administration and approved by the attorney general and reporter.

(c) All expenses of the task force shall be born by the department of human services, which shall also provide all necessary staff support to the task force.

71-3-1105. All implementation activities under the provisions of this act shall be executed through the community service agencies established under Title 37, Chapter 5, Part 3.

71-3-1106. The commissioner of human services shall take all necessary steps, pursuant to the task force recommendations and strategies, to obtain the federal funding to which this state is entitled for the purposes established in this act.

SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon becoming a law, the public welfare requiring it.